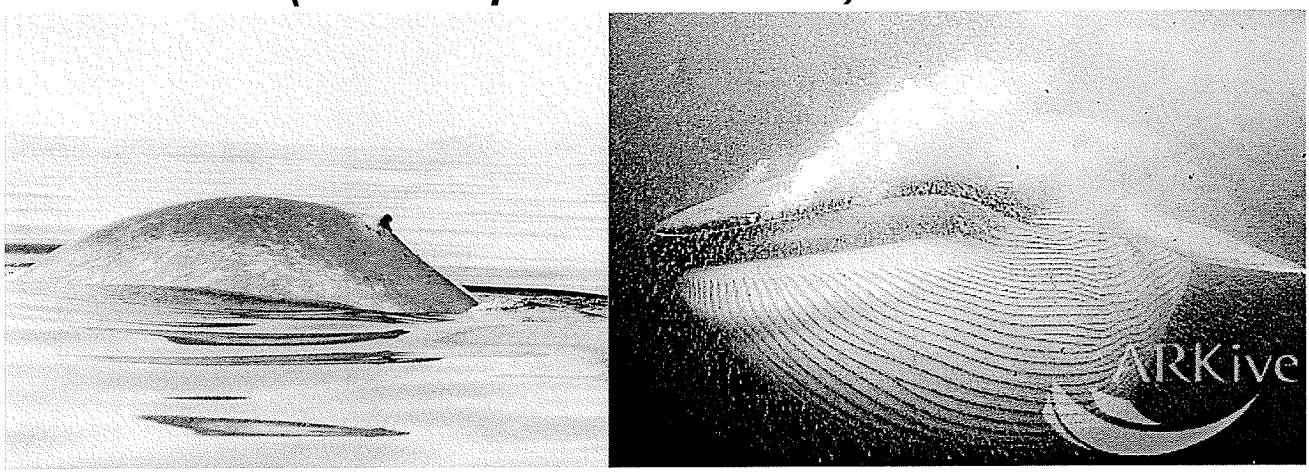
Blue Whale *(Balaenoptera musculus)*



Blue whales are the largest animals to have ever lived on Earth with some individuals reaching lengths of nearly 100 feet (30.5 meters). Blue whale blows, also called spouts, consist of air and water and rise about 30 feet (9.1 meters) high.

Blue whales are the largest baleen whale species--in fact they are the largest animal in the world. Blue whales can grow to be about 100 feet (30.5 meters) in length and may weigh around 160 tons, however most probably grow to 80 - 90 feet (24.4 - 27.4 meters) long. They are mottled bluish gray, with broad flat heads and a small dorsal fin located in the last forth of the body. Newborn blue whales are about 23 feet (7 meters) long. The worldwide blue whale population is unknown however, blue whales are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Blue whales were hunted extensively for their large quantities of baleen, blubber, and meat. Although blue whales are protected, their populations show few signs of recovery. Female blue whales are generally larger than males, and northern hemisphere blue whales are generally smaller than those in the southern hemisphere. Blue whales are light bluish gray on their dorsal side and mottled gray whitish on their bellies. Some have yellowish bellies.

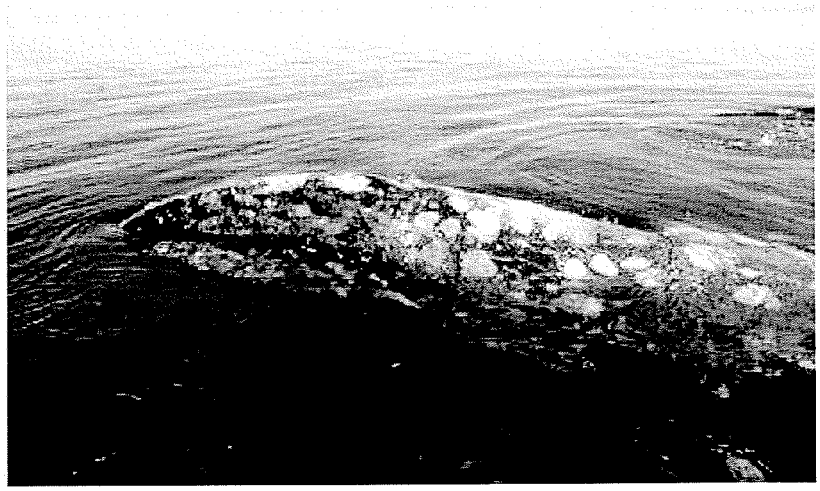
It is thought that baleen whales (including blue whales) probably have excellent hearing, especially at low frequencies, which is valuable in the dark ocean environment where vision is less useful.

Blue whales filter their food through their baleen plates. Blue whales eat krill (euphausiids) and copepods. A blue whale can eat up to 8,000 lbs. of krill during its peak consumption period. It is estimated to take 2,200 lbs. of food to fill a blue whale's stomach. Blue whales begin mating between 5-10 years of age. Females are pregnant for about 11 months and females get pregnant approximately every two to four years. Calves can gain 200 lbs. each day while nursing. Mother and calf form a very close bond, with the baby often swimming close to its mother.

Sightings of blue whales have become more common in the Santa Barbara Channel since 1989. Although they have been found year round in the Channel, they typically arrive in June and remain until August or September. When they are common, as many as 100 animals can be seen at one time (Calambodikis et al. 2000).

(souce: NOAA YOTO98 & NMFS website & CDFG)

Gray Whale *(Eschrichtius robustus)*



Gray whales are mottled gray and grow to 40 - 50 feet (12.2 - 15.2 meters) in length and produce sounds including moans, rumbles and growls. The most prevalent call is a series of knocking sounds. Gray whales carry whale lice and parasitic barnacles that look like crabs. These parasites create yellow and white patches on the whales. Instead of a dorsal fin, gray whales have 9 - 13 bumps along their dorsal ridges.

It is thought that gray whales probably have excellent hearing, especially at low frequencies, which is valuable in the dark ocean environment where vision is less useful.

Gray whales filter their food through coarse baleen plates. Gray whales are unique in that they prefer prey that live near or on the sea floor. They suck sediment and prey from the sea floor by rolling on their sides and swimming slowly.

Gray whales typically dive for three to six minutes and blow (exhale), from three to five times before diving again.

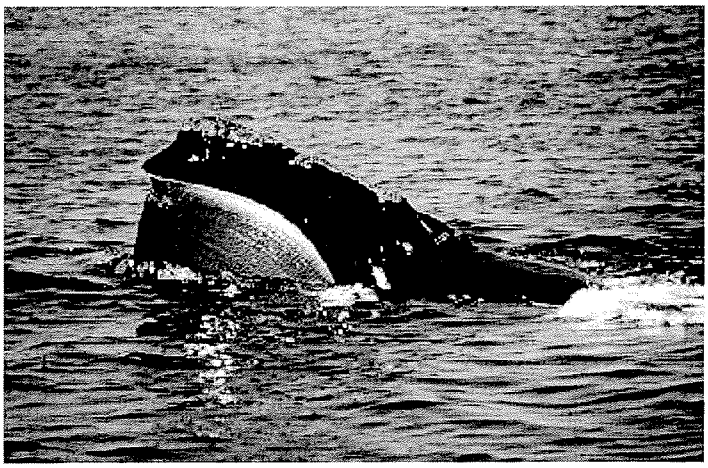
Gray whales are probably old enough to mate around 8 years old. Females are pregnant for about 13 months approximately every two to four years. Calves are born able to swim and are known to double their weight in about three months, and double their length in about two years. A mother and calf form a very close attachment, with the calf spending the majority of its time swimming close to its mother.

Because of an absence of teeth (which can be used to estimate age in other mammals), it is difficult to tell the age of a gray whale.

Each winter, gray whales migrate south (from their rich feeding grounds in the Arctic) to Baja California where they mate and nurse their calves. This southern migration typically occurs from mid-December to March. The northbound migration begins in February and continues into May. Both northbound and southbound animals may be seen in the Southern California Bight.

(sources: NOAA Fisheries & Alaska Region websites)

Northern Right Whale *(Eubalaena glacialis)*



Right whales are large, rotund, black whales with large heads, long rostrums, and no dorsal fins. They can grow up to 53 feet (16.2 meters) long. Right whales have distinguishing callosities which are the best identification both for the species and for the individual whale. It has been hard to research this question because right whales are too large to study in an oceanarium and are difficult to study in the open ocean. It is thought that right whales probably have excellent hearing, especially at low frequencies, which is valuable in the dark ocean environment where vision is less useful.

Right whales are baleen whales, they filter their food through their long baleen plates. Right whales open their great mouths and graze along the surface of the water. Right whales mostly eat small crustaceans including copepods and small shrimp-like animals called euphausiids. Right whales are probably old enough to mate around 8 years old. Females are pregnant for about 13 months and only get pregnant approximately every three to five years. Calves are born able to swim. A mother and her calf form a very close attachment. The calf spends most of its time swimming close to its mother and is carried in the mother's "slip stream," the wake which develops as the mother swims.

Northern right whales are considered rare in California, although they have been sighted as far south as central Baja (Ferrero et al. 2000). It is thought that northern right whales calve in temperate coastal waters during the winter months and migrate to higher latitudes during the summer (Braham and Rice 1984). A current abundance estimate for right whales in California waters is unavailable. Right whales were seen off Half Moon Bay in 1986 and 1987 (NOAA 1992). Another was observed offshore of the Big Sur coast February 27, 1998 (B. Durdos pers. comm.). Right whales are zooplankton specialists feeding on small crustaceans including copepods and euphausiids (Wynne and Folkens 1992).

(sources: NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region website & CDFG website)